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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004862

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AT TGS PROVIDE A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

REF: A. ANKARA TU 4809

[B](#). ANKARA 4409

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Timothy A. Betts, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: Further to reftels report on Turkish military promotions that were decided at the August 1-4 meeting of the Supreme Military Council (Yukse Askeri Surasi - YAS), post has learned of numerous assignment changes for key military interlocutors (Note: as well as additional information requiring correction of several ref B points. End Note.) Some moves are effective immediately, but all are effective no later than Aug.30. In the Turkish General Staff (TGS) headquarters, all but one Division Chief will change assignments. In TGS Operations (J-3), the division chief and the heads of the Training Department and the Command and Control Department will move on. In Plans and Principles (J-5), four of our close interlocutors, including LTG Babaoğlu, the division chief, and MG Arslan, the Strategy Department Chief, will change jobs. Despite this, we do not anticipate a major TGS strategy shift. That said, we will need to work to establish the same cooperative relationship with Kalyoncu, the new Chief of Operations, who has primary responsibility for Iraq, and with our new J-5 interlocutors -- who work the overall bilateral relationship, including basing issues -- that we had with their predecessors, and to reinvigorate the High Level Defense Group (HLDG), which has not met in over two years. END SUMMARY.

MASSIVE J-HEAD EXODUS

[1](#)2. (C) Despite some speculation that TGS would keep J-3 Chief LTG Metin Yavuz Yalcin in place for another year given the expected turnover of most other TGS division chiefs, Yalcin has been reassigned as Commander of 5th Corps in Corlu. LTG Saldiray Berk, former TGS Chief of Personnel (J-1) will take command of 4th Corps in Ankara. LTG Abdullah Cahit Sarsilmaz, previously TGS Chief of Logistics (J-4), will command 7th Corps in Diyarbakir, and LTG Aydogan Babaoğlu, TGS Chief of Plans and Principles (J-5) will move to Istanbul as War Academies Commander. VADM Sukru Taner Ezgu, former TGS Chief of Communications, Electronics and Data Systems (J-6) was retired. Only the J-2 Chief, LTG Aslan Guner, remained in place.

NEW ARRIVALS GENERALLY UNKNOWN

[1](#)3. (C) With the exception of Yalcin's successor in J-3, LTG Bekir Kalyoncu, and Babaoğlu's replacement in J-5, LTG Akin Zorlu, little is known about the new TGS division chiefs. Kalyoncu, who had been sidelined following the much-publicized July 4, 2003 al-Suleymaniah incident (ref a) as Commander of TGS Communications School in Ankara, knows Iraq well. We do not expect any change in Iraq policy. LTG Zorlu, the new J-5 Chief, is a tough interlocutor who was well-regarded as the Commander of ISAF II and in his most recent assignment as Land Forces Chief of Plans and Policy. He is the first Land Forces officer to head J-5 since the slot was taken over by the Air Force ten years ago. This consolidates the two most prestigious divisions (J-3, J-5) under Land Forces control. LTG Berk's successor as J-1 Chief is newly promoted LTG Servet Yoruk, the former Special Forces Commander. LTG Sarsilmaz (J-4) will be replaced by LTG Rasim Arslan, a new protomee who headed the Air Force Staff College, and retired VADM Egzu's successor at J-6 is VADM Erdal Bucak, who was in the Naval Forces Inspector General's office. Little is known about those individuals.

[1](#)4. (C) The reassignment of MG Cengiz Arslan from J-5 Strategy Division Chief to Deputy Commander of 3rd Corps and Commander of the 52nd Mechanized Division in Istanbul is a great loss. Arslan, our primary interlocutor on the PolMil Working Group and HLDG, is a straight shooter who cares about the relationship and worked hard to maintain open communication and forward momentum during the dark days of our bilateral relations. His successor, newly promoted MG Serdar Savas, was Chief of Planning for the Land Forces. He will have to work hard to match the effectiveness of his predecessor.

[1](#)5. (C) Other J-5 changes include the succession of BG Baynur

Pekar by BG Yalicin Ergul as Chief of the Technology, Armaments and Defense Research Department. Pekar, a reluctant interlocutor on missile defense and space issues who is uncomfortable with his English, will become Commander of the 1st Main Jet Base in Eskisehir. We have higher hopes for Ergul, an Air Force officer newly promoted from Colonel. BG Ethem Halidun Solmazturk, former Chief of Disarmament and International Security Matters and a solid interlocutor, was retired and will be succeeded by BG Tuncer Erinmezler, who is coming from the 3rd Army Command in Erzincan, where he was Chief of Staff for Operations. This will likely be Erinmezler's last assignment before retiring.

KOSANER IN LINE FOR CHOD

16. (C) Ref b report erroneously supposed GEN Kosaner was born in 1943 not 1945; he, therefore, could become CHOD if he progresses from the DCHOD position to 1st Army Commander in Istanbul in 2007 and then succeeds GEN Basbug as Commander, Turkish Land Forces in 2008. LTG Ergin Saygun, the former Turkish National Military Representative (NMR) to NATO, who received his fourth star, became TLFC Chief of Staff, not Aegean Army Commander as previously reported.

LOOKING FORWARD

17. (C) Given our significant bilateral and multilateral issues with Turkey, we must work to quickly develop relationships with our new TGS counterparts. The HLDG, which traditionally provided the forum to look to the future with TGS and develop a joint strategy on issues of mutual importance, has not been held since 2003. Reinvigoration of this process early in the tenure of Kosaner and our J-5 counterparts will help to reinforce the importance of the relationship and set the tone for our work together over the next year. To start this process, post recommends that GEN Pace send letters of congratulation to former DCHOD Basbug and to Kosaner, noting:

1) For Basbug: USG appreciation for Basbug's work on behalf of the relationship as DCHOD and our hope for his continued efforts to support the relationship as 1st Army Commander in Istanbul;

2) For Kosaner: USG appreciation for the cooperative relationship we shared with his predecessor and our desire to continue this close working relationship during his tenure -- beginning with the re-invigoration of the HLDG in 2005.
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